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**WILLIAMS BROTHERS PLEAD GUILTY TO ARSON ATTACKS ON THREE
SACRAMENTO SYNAGOGUES AND A HEALTH CLINIC**

SACRAMENTO--The United States Justice Department announced today that BENJAMIN MATTHEW WILLIAMS, 33, and his brother JAMES TYLER WILLIAMS, 31, of Palo Cedro, California, pleaded guilty today in U.S. District Court in Sacramento to felony charges relating to arson fires at three Sacramento synagogues and a clinic that provides reproductive health services, during the summer of 1999. Trial had been scheduled to commence on October 16, 2001.

The guilty pleas resolve the federal prosecution of the WILLIAMS brothers arising from the arson fires at Congregation B'nai Israel, Congregation Beth Shalom, and the Keneset Israel Torah Center, which fires were set in the early morning hours of June 18, 1999, and an arson fire at a medical building that contained offices including the Choice Medical Group clinic which was set during the early morning hours of July 2, 1999. Homicide charges against both defendants are still pending in the Shasta County Superior Court. Trial in that matter is currently scheduled for April 2, 2002.

According to Assistant U.S. Attorneys R. Steven Lapham and Benjamin B. Wagner, who are prosecuting the case, BENJAMIN MATTHEW WILLIAMS pleaded guilty to two counts of using a fire to commit a federal felony, that is, the destruction of religious property. Together, the two counts carry a mandatory sentence of 30 years in prison. Although the two charges to which he pleaded guilty relate to the arson fires at the Congregation B'nai Israel and the Congregation Beth Shalom synagogues, defendant BENJAMIN MATTHEW WILLIAMS in his plea agreement admitted that he and his brother had caused all four arson fires.

Defendant JAMES TYLER WILLIAMS pleaded guilty to four counts of arson, one relating to each of the four fires, to three counts of destruction of religious property, and to one count of using fire to commit a federal felony. The prosecutors and the defendant agreed in the plea agreement that the defendant should be sentenced under the U.S. sentencing guidelines to a prison term within the range 228 to 255 months, or 19 to over 21 years.

Parole has been abolished in the federal criminal system, and the WILLIAMS brothers

will be required by law to serve at least 85% of the prison time imposed. Each defendant will also be ordered to pay restitution to the victim institutions for the losses sustained as a result of the fires. Finally, each defendant will be ordered to serve a term of supervised release following the service of their prison terms. Sentencing before U.S. District Court Judge Garland E. Burrell is scheduled for November 30, 2001, at 10:00 am.

The prosecution was the product of an extensive investigation by a joint task force led by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. Other agencies that contributed to the investigation include the U.S. Secret Service, the Sacramento Sheriff's Office, the Sacramento Police Department, the Sacramento District Attorney's Office, the Shasta County Sheriff's Office, the California Department of Motor Vehicles, the Sacramento City Fire Department, the Sacramento Metropolitan Fire Department, the California Highway Patrol, the Governor's Office of Emergency Services, and the El Dorado County Sheriff's Department.

U.S. Attorney John K. Vincent said, "Crimes against people because of their religious beliefs diminish us all." He praised the work of the state and federal law enforcement agencies in the course of the investigation and prosecution. "These guilty pleas are a direct result of the truly outstanding cooperation at all levels among the federal and state law enforcement agencies which conducted this investigation. The investigation was long and complex, but the investigating agents, working together, left no stone unturned in their search for evidence." He particularly cited the excellent forensic work in the case done by the Sacramento County District Attorney's Laboratory of Forensic Services.

FBI Special Agent in Charge Richard Baker said "Today's announcement closes a difficult chapter in our area's recent history. Crimes motivated by intolerance or hate strike at the heart of our society, but we can all be proud of the way this community and its law enforcement representatives joined together to combat these senseless crimes."

John A. Torres, Special Agent in Charge for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, said "The Sacramento community is a safer place due to the personal and professional commitment and resourcefulness of the men and women of the various law enforcement agencies that brought this investigation to a successful conclusion."

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